

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 8846

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, PINT, VS

SUBJECT: THE VIET CONG ORGANIZE NEW FORCES

CICNPAC FOR POLAD

THE FOLLOWING SENT SAIGON FROM AMCONSULCAN THO 19 MAY 73 REPEATED
TO YOU FOR YOUR ACTION AND INFO. QUOTE:

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAN THO 0331

E.

M 11652: GDS

TAGS(0; .90 , PINT, VS

SUBJECT: THE VIET CONG ORGANIZE NEW FORCES

1. SUMMARY. SINCE THE SPRING 1972 OFFENSIVE, THE VIET CONG HAVE
ORGANIZED NEW MILITARY UNITS. AS THE CEASEFIRE APPROACHED AND THE
POST- CEASEFIRE PERIOD BEGAN, THE PACE OF NEW BATTALION FORMATION
INCREASED SHARPLY. TO DATE, SOME TWENTY- FIVE NEW BATTALIONS--
STILL LARGELY PAPER FORCES-- ALREADY EXIST. THESE ARE REINFORCED
WITH NEWLY- INAUGURATED DISTRICT, VILLAGE AND HAMLET UNITS. RE-
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CRUITMENT IS PROCEEDING SLOWLY AND ARMS ARE SCARCE. IN TIME, ESPECIALLY IF THE NEW BATTALIONS ARE USED TO ABSORB DELTA-EXPERIENCED NVA TROOPS, THEY WILL PRESENT THE GVN WITH A CONSIDERABLE THREAT. END SUMMARY.

2. SINCE JULY 1972 VC MR II AND MR III HAVE UNDERTAKEN A MAJOR DRIVE TO INCREASE SHARPLY THE NUMBER OF NEW VIET CONG PROVINCIAL LOCAL FORCE BATTALIONS. IN SUPPORT OF THESE BATTALIONS, BOTH VIET CONG MILITARY REGIONS HAVE INSTRUCTED PROVINCES TO ORGANIZE NEW DISTRICT, VILLAGE AND HAMLET FORCES. PRESSURE TO RECRUIT HAS RISEN ACCORDINGLY. GVN MR IV INTELLIGENCE PRESENTLY CONFIRMS THE EXISTENCE OF NINETEEN NEW BATTALIONS. OF THE NINETEEN CONFIRMED BATTALIONS, NINE WERE FORMED IN THE LAST TWO MONTHS OF 1972 AND SEVEN MORE IN THE FIRST TWO MONTHS OF 1973. SEVEN OF THE NINETEEN ARE IN VC MR II, THE REMAINING IN VC MR III.

3. THE ARVN G-2 LIST IS BY NO MEANS COMPLETE. CAN THO 310 NOTED THE RECENT FORMATION OF AN ALL KHMER BATTALION IN VINH BINH. THE BAC LIEU SECTOR S-2 MAY 3 REPORTED HE HAD IDENTIFIED A NEW BATTALION IN CONTESTED VINH CHAU DISTRICT. THIS UNIT GROUPS TWO OLDER LOCAL FORCE COMPANIES. BASED ON AN EXTREMELY RELIABLE APRIL 25 RALLIER REPORT, BS XUYEN SECTOR NOTES THAT THE VIET CONG ARE ORGANIZING A THIRD PHU LOI BATTALION. A SECOND PHU LOI PROVINCIAL BATTALION WAS FORMED IN NOVEMBER 1972 AND IS INCLUDED AMONG THOSE UNITS GVN MR IV HAS IDENTIFIED. EVEN IN PACIFIED CO DEC PROVINCE, A PART OF VC VINH LONG, THERE ARE INDICATIONS THE VIET CONG ARE RECRUITING A DISTRICT COMPANY. IN SUMMARY, IT APPEARS EACH VC PROVINCE HAS BEEN INSTRUCTED TO FORM AT LEAST ONE NEW BATTALION. IN LATE 1972, THE VC ORGANIZED FOUR IN VC BEN TRE, THREE IN MY THO, AND TWO EACH IN CHAU HA (WESTERN KIEN GIANG AND CHAU DOC), SOC TRANG AND BAC LIEU. THERE HAVE BEEN SEVERAL REPORTS THE VIET CONG INTEND TO SET UP REGIMENTS, GROUPING NEW AND OLD LOCAL FORCE UNITS. THESE REPORTS, HOWEVER, REMAIN UNCONFIRMED.

4. AS CAPTURED VC DOCUMENTS READILY ADMIT, BATTALION STRENGTH IS LOW. SEVERAL ARE LITTLE MORE THAN PAPER FORCES AND MAY HAVE NO MORE THAN 50 MEN APIEC. OTHERS ARE ALREADY FAIRLY EFFECTIVE COMBAT FORCES. G-2 MR IV ESTIMATES THE NEW U MINU 5 BATTALION IN CA MU AND THE BAC LIEU 509 HAVE OVER 100 MEN APIECE. ACCORDING TO THE BA XUYEN RALLIER, THE VC SOC TRANG PHU LOI 2
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BATTALION HAS AS MANY AS 180 MEN. THE AVERAGE SIZE OF NEW BATTALIONS SEEMS TO RUN ABOUT 75 MEN.

5. ALMOST INVARIABLY THE VC ARE DRAWING PERSONNEL FOR THEIR NEW UNITS FROM OLDER DISTRICT COMPANIES; IN SOME CASES THEY ARE SIMPLY UPGRADING ENTIRE DISTRICT COMPANIES, ORGANIZING THEM INTO BATTALIONS, AND TASKING DISTRICTS TO FORM NEW UNITS FROM VILLAGE

GUERRILLAS. THIS IS THE CASE IN VC CHAU HA. THE MAJORITY OF NEW BATTALION CADRE ARE VIET CONG, BUT SOME NVA FILLERS MAY BE PRESENT.

6. ARMAMENT VARIES WIDELY. ACCORDING TO THE BA XUYEN RALLIER REPORT, THE NEW PHU LOI 2 BATTALION HAS ONE 60 MM MORTAR, TWO M-60 MACHINE GUNS, TWO B-40 ROCKET LAUNCHERS, THREE M-79 S, TWELVE M-16 RFLES, THIRTEEN K-2 S, AND TWO PRC-25 RADIOS. DESPITE THE RELATIVESHORTAGEOF EQUIPMENT, THE VIET CONG ARE USING THEIR NEW UNITS, PRINCIPALLY IN OUTPOST ATTACKS. THE PHU LOI 2 BATTALION TASTED BLOOD FOR THE FIRST TIME ON JANUARY 28-29, WHEN IT OVERRAN A LIGHTLY- DEVENDED OUTPOST. IT WAS BADLY BATTERED ON JANUARY 30 WHEN BA XUYEN SECTOR FORCES COUNTER ATTACKED AND HAS REMAINED DORMANT SINCE.

7. BEHIND THE ARRAY OF NEW PROVINCIAL MANEUVER UNITS, VC MR II AND MR III HAVE ORDERED THE FORMATION OF NEW DISTRICT COMPANIES, VILLAGE PLATOONS, AND HAMLET SQUADS. BOTH MILITARY REGIONS ARE PRESSING AN ACTIVE RECRUITMENT CAMPAIGN. A VC SOC TRANG PROVINCE COMMITTEE DOCUMENT CAPTURED IN MARCH SPELLS OUT JUST WHAT VC MR III EXPECTS AT EACH LEVEL. ACCORDING TO THE DOCUMENT, SOC TRANG PROVINCE WILL BRING ITS OLD PHU LOI BATTALION UP TO 300- MAN STRENGTH. TWO NEW BATTALIONS WILL AVERAGE 250 MEN EACH. COMPONENT COMPANIES WILL CARRY 60-70 MEN. EACH DISTRICT MUST BRING ITS PRESENT TWO COMPANIES UP TO 60-70 MEN AND ORGANIZE A THIRD COMPANY. SPECIAL PROVINCE AND DISTRICT TOWN COMPANIES ARE TO BE FORMED. VILLAGES WILL ORGANIZE FROM ONE TO FOUR PLATOONS, AND HAMLETS, DEPENDING ON THE DEGREE OF VC CONTROL AND HAMLET SIZE, WILL FORM FROM ONE SQUAD TO THREE PLATOONS. THE ORDER INSTRUCTED DISTRICT, VILLAGE AND HAMLET FORCES TO ARM THEMSELVES FROM CAPTURED OR PURCHASED RVNAF EQUIPMENT. NO NVA/ VC EQUIPMENT FROM COMMUNIST SOURCES WAS PROMISED.

8. COMMENT: THE VIET CONG HAVE TRADITIONALLY RECRUITED AT THE CONFIDENTIAL

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HAMLET LEVEL, TURNING RECRUITS INTO SOLDIERS AS THEY MOVE UP THE LADDER OF LOCAL FORCES. EACH PROMOTION TOOK A NEW VC FURTHER FROM HOME AND THEREBY GRADUALLY ACCLIMATIZED HIM TO HIS NEW ROLE. NOT IN RECENT HISTORY, HOWEVER, HAVE THE VIET CONG ORGANIZED ON SUCH A LARGE SCALE NEW MANEUVER UNITS. NOR HAVE THEY PLACED TOP PRIORITY ON CREATING AND MANNING PROVINCIAL BATTALIONS. THE COINCIDENCE OF THEIR CAMPAIGN WITH THE CEASEFIRE NEGOTIATIONS AND THE POST- CEASEFIRE POLITICAL STRUGGLE HAS SPECIAL IMPORTANCE AND MAY HAVE THREE EXPLANATIONS. FIRST, UNDER COSVN GUIDANCE, THE VIET CONG, GREATLY WEAKENED IN THE DELTA AND OUTNUMBERED IN MANEUVER UNIT STRENGTH BY THE NVA BY A RATIO OF FOUR TO ONE, MAY WISH TO CREATE THE IMPRESSION BOTH OF NEW POWER AND AN INDEPENDENT IDENTITY. SECOND, THE PRG MAY WISH TO USE THE NEW BATTALIONS AND

PERHAPS EVENTUALLY REGIMENTS IN A DEMOBILIZATION TRADE-OFF WITH THE GVN WHENEVER THE ISSUE COMES TO THE NEGOTIATING TABLE. MORE OMNIOUSLY, THE VC MAY HAVE ORGANIZED THEIR NEW BATTALIONS AS SKELETONS THAT CAN EVENTUALLY BE FLESHED OUT WITH NVA SOLDIERS ALREADY ASSIGNED TO THE DELTA. THIS MANEUVER WOULD PERMIT THE NVA TO WITHDRAW THEIR UNITS FROM THE DELTA WITHOUT REDUCING THE NUMBER OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNIST COMBATANTS. MR IV COMMANDER, MG NGUYEN VINH NGHI, PLACES GREAT CREDENCE IN THIS POSSIBILITY. IT SHOULD NOT BE RULED OUT.

9. THE DRIVE TO ORGANIZE NEW FORCES IS NOT PROCEEDING WITHOUT COST. THE VIET CONG ARE RAIDING DISTRICT UNITS WHICH, IN TURN, ARE CALLING FOR FILLERS FROM VILLAGES AND HAMLETS. NEW RECRUITMENT IS NOT GOING WELL. AS THE CAPTURED VC SOC TRANG DOCUMENT NOTES "... RIGHT NOW VILLAGES AND HAMLETS PRODUCE VERY FEW GUERRILLAS TO SEND TO PROVINCE AND DISTRICT UNITS. THE REASON WHY VILLAGES AND HAMLETS CANNOT PRODUCE ENOUGH TROOPS IS BECAUSE THEIR POLITICAL EFFORT IS WEAK. THEY CANNOT MOBILIZE PEOPLE TO JOIN THE REVOLUTIONARY ARMED FORCES.... THERE ARE MANY REQUIREMENTS WHICH HAVE NOT BEEN DONE BECAUSE SOME LOCATIONS REFUSE TO COMPLY WITH OUR PLANS AND DIRECTIVES CORRECTLY."

10. WHILE THE MOVE MAY EVENTUALLY GIVE THE VIET CONG MORE MILITARY PUNCH IN SELECTED AREAS, AND GREATER MOBILITY, IT WILL DEFLATE THE VC MILITARY AND POLITICAL PRESENCE AT LOCAL LEVELS. FURTHERMORE, IF PAST EXPERIENCE HOLDS TRUE, THE UPGRADING WILL LOWER MORALE OF THOSE "PROMOTED"-- AT LEAST IN THE SHORT RUN. FINALLY, THE CONCEN-

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TRATION OF VC ASSETS INTO BATTALIONS WILL INCREASE THEIR VULNERABILITY TO RVNAF'S SUPERIOR FIREPOWER, MANPOWER AND MOBILITY.

11. THE NEW VC UNITS ARE NOT A THREAT FOR THE MOMENT. THE OFFICERS ARE INEXPERIENCED AND (#) ARE LOW AND

ARMAMENT IS POOR. IN TIME, EACH FACTOR MAY IMPROVE. THE NEW BATTALIONS HAVE SEVERAL KEY ASSETS-- LOCAL TIES, ACCESS TO LOCAL INTELLIGENCE, AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE TERRAIN. AT A MINIMUM, THEY WILL EVENTUALLY BE ABLE TO SHIELD THE VC POLITICAL STRUGGLE. IN THE EVENT THESE UNITS ARE REINFORCED BY EXPERIENCED NVA TROOPS, THEY WILL PRESENT A CONSIDERABLE MILITARY THREAT TO THE GVN. WISNER UNQUOTE
WHITEHOUSE

NOTE BY OC/ T: SAIGON 8846 (#) OMISSION. CORRECTION TO FOLLOW.

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